DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 015 CE 070 579

TITLE	Managing Assessment.
INSTITUTION	Further Education Development Agency, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-85338-410-0
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	81p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Further Education Development Agency, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH, England, United Kingdom (8.50 British pounds).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accountability; Basic Skills; *Educational Assessment; Educational Planning; Educational Policy; Educational Quality; *Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; Foreign Countries; National Programs; Policy Formation; Prior Learning; Program Evaluation; Quality Control; Student Certification; *Student Evaluation; Technical Institutes; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Great Britain

ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended for curriculum managers at British further education colleges, presents guidelines for developing and implementing a college assessment policy based on the principle that the objectives of all assessment procedures and policies are as follows: enhance the assessment provision within colleges; ensure that assessment is consistent and fair to all students; allow colleges to monitor their assessment provision; and provide clear evidence for external bodies. Discussed in part 1 are the following aspects of developing a college assessment policy: principles and assessment entitlements in operation within a college; the assessment stages for students from entry to exit; the assessment processes used within colleges; and quality assurance and control procedures for monitoring assessment practice. Part 2 contains codes of practice defining cross-college provision for the following: initial assessment; accreditation of prior learning; core skills assessment; recording of achievement; and access to fair assessment. Examined in part 3, which focuses on implementing policy and codes of practice at the program level, are the following: assessment entitlements and regulations; assessment planning; and assessment design and grading criteria. Appended are the following: national body requirements; sources of information about assessments and audits; and sample auditing questions. (MN)

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Cover design based on work by Christopher Raven

ISBN 1 85338 410 0

Price: £8.50

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Registered charity number 10044045

Printed by Blackmore Press, Shaftesbury, Dorset

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Executive summary

This report examines the development of a strategy for the management of assessment within colleges. It is aimed at curriculum managers and is intended to assist development of policies and codes of practice for assessment and internal verification.

It comprises the following three parts:

Part 1: Developing a college assessment policy

Part 2: Guidance on creating codes of practice

Part 3: Implementing policy and codes of practice at the programme level

PART 1: A COLLEGE ASSESSMENT POLICY

This will include:

- the principles and assessment entitlements in operation within a college
- the assessment stages for students from entry to exit
- the assessment processes used within a college
- quality assurance and control procedures for monitoring assessment practice

PART 2: COLLEGE CODES OF PRACTICE

These will define the operation of cross-college provision for:

- initial assessment
- accreditation of prior learning
- core skills assessment
- recording of achievement
- access to fair assessment

PART 2: ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AT THE PROGRAMME LEVEL

Cross-college teams on all programmes (NVQs, GNVQs, GCE A levels, GCSE, OCN and other provision) should produce a set of tutor and student guides outlining the common procedures operating within the college. These guides would include:

- assessment regulations and requirements
- assessment planning
- assessment design and grading criteria

The basic principles underlying this publication are that the development of common procedures and policies will:

- enhance the assessment provision within colleges
- ensure that assessment is consistent and fair to all students
- allow colleges to monitor their assessment provision
- provide clear evidence for external bodies

Most of the research for this report is based upon practices found in colleges that have been working on FEDA assessment projects. Included are examples of policies and codes of practice which have been implemented by these colleges and are testimony to their strategic planning and commitment to excellence.

Introduction

Reasons for a college-wide strategy

Colleges should have an assessment strategy which:

- ensures the quality and standardisation of assessment practice
- meets national body requirements for assessment procedures

This should lead to:

Equitable treatment in assessment

Assessment activities need to ensure that all students, and in particular ethnic minority groups and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are not disadvantaged by inappropriate or invalid assessment judgements. This can be done within colleges by agreeing an equal opportunities code of practice.

Consistency of assessment

Consistency of assessment is established through the development of consensus on standards and procedures. Involving staff teams in the development of a college-wide code and agreeing procedures for assessment is a positive method of achieving this consensus.

Procedures for assessment must meet the needs of the relevant bodies, including:

- the requirements related to assessment as laid down in the *Charter for Further Education* (DFEE) and individual college charters
- the inspectorate requirements (FEFC circular 93/28) regarding assessment as indicated in the guideline areas
- the assessment implications of the recurrent funding methodology as stated in the 1994-95 guidance document of the FEFC; circular 94/27 and review of the tariff for 1996-97 circular 95/32
- the FEFC college performance indicators and data collection requirements regarding college and student achievement, with reference to value added, as indicated in the individualised student data collection circular 94/10 and consultation document on performance indicators 94/12

- the accrediting and awarding body quality and centre-approval criteria related to assessment and internal verification, the revisions to the TDLB standards; GNVQ Planning and Assessment Units and GNVQ Quality Framework

Senior curriculum managers will need to clarify current requirements to programme teams. Appendix A, which draws together the statements from the FEFC circulars and EVB guidelines above, is intended to support this initial process of staff briefing and consultation.

There is also an European perspective that is relevant to assessment strategy. The move towards accords, protocols and codes of practice by the awarding bodies reflects the European Union philosophy of attempting to reach agreement on the parity of systems and structures within European member states.

AN INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The purpose of an assessment strategy is to identify the key functions of assessment and how to fulfil them. Establishing a college-wide assessment system allows monitoring of current provision and identification of potential problems.

The final product will be an assessment framework. This could comprise three parts - which correspond to the three parts in this report.

Photoula Kypri
FEDA Development Officer

Part one: Developing a college assessment policy

Part 1 of this report looks at the way in which colleges plan and develop an assessment policy framework. It is divided into three sections:

SECTION 1: MANAGING THE PROCESS 9
SECTION 2: KEY FEATURES OF A POLICY 11
SECTION 3: QUALITY CONTROL 14

Section 1: Managing the process

In order to develop an assessment framework colleges need to analyse their current provision. The first stage is to establish a management team and select a co-ordinator. The process of identifying current assessment practice and developing cross-college procedures will vary with the size and complexity of the college.

Once the management team is in place their first task is likely to be a review of the present system. This is best undertaken through an audit to investigate the structure and practice of current assessment methods within the college.

Appendix C includes a list of questions which can be used as the basis for an audit. Once the audit has been completed priorities for action may be identified.

Below are the stages in managing the development process:

1.1. Draw up a draft development plan

- select a co-ordinator and management team
- audit current systems and provision (see Appendix C)
- map relevant national body requirements (see Appendix A)
- produce a development plan for establishing:
  college policy
  codes of practice
  assessment guides

1.2. Consultation and approval

- identify cross-college development teams
- disseminate development plan for consultation
- draft a policy document on the proposed assessment framework
- disseminate draft policy document for consultation
- re-draft policy document in the light of responses
- submit policy document to management team and academic board for approval

Develop codes of practice for:

- initial assessment
- accreditation of prior learning
- core skills assessment
- recording of achievement
- access to fair assessment

Develop programme guides for:

- assessment planning procedures
- assessment regulations
- student tracking procedures
- internal verification procedures
- quality review mechanisms

The demands of assessment on both students and tutors require clear guidelines and an agreed policy from colleges. In addition the FEFC recurrent funding methodology has required colleges to establish internal assessment systems and provide clear evidence of the assessment procedures operating for inspection purposes.

The way in which colleges develop their assessment policy will vary according to internal structures, staffing, programmes offered, etc. but key elements are likely to include:

1 assessment principles

2 assessment stages

3 assessment processes

Each of these elements is examined more closely below using examples taken from colleges involved in FEDA projects.

2.1 Assessment principles

The key principles of assessment are common to all qualifications although individual programme areas will vary in their assessment regime. Increasingly students are on mixed programmes combining GNVQs with GCE A level or vocational qualifications with GCSE.

Colleges need to ensure that common standards and support mechanisms are in place to enable students to achieve their qualification aim.

The key principles for fair assessment which underline this report can be expressed as the following:

- **enhancement of learning**: a key purpose of assessment is to ensure learning
- **reliability and validity**: all assessment should be based upon explicit assessment objectives
- **shared understanding of standards**: staff are trained in assessment according to the awarding and accrediting bodies' regulations
- **quality assurance:** a system is in place to monitor assessment practice

2.2 Assessment stages

Each college will need to identify the assessment stages which are to operate within their college from pre-entry guidance and assessment to achievement and progression.

Although assessment during the induction stage is not new, the implementation of the FEFC recurrent methodology increases the importance of the development of initial assessment procedures. The FEFC requirement to provide evidence of initial guidance and assessment procedures to qualify for entry units of funding has focused colleges on threshold services.

Colleges have also developed systems for on-programme tracking of student progress and achievement. Many colleges which currently operate a college-wide approach to the recording of achievement are now developing management information systems to monitor assessment patterns and achievement levels in line with the FEFC data collection requirements and DFEE guidance.

The monitoring of assessment practice against agreed quality procedures and standards provides a benchmark to measure progress at each stage of assessment.

College example: an assessment map:

Pre-entry and Entry	On programme	Achievement
initial guidance and assessment	diagnostic assessment during induction phase	accreditation and certification
placement or selection	assessment planning and recording	monitoring of assessment practice
initial screening	formative and summative assessment	

2.3 Assessment processes

A policy framework needs to identify how the assessment process will fit into each programme area so that:

- all students have an assessment plan to enhance their learning process. This is intended to safeguard against the bunching of assignments/essays and the duplication of assessment topic
- programme teams identify assessment topics and use appropriate assessment methods
- curriculum managers to monitor assessment practice as part of the college quality assurance procedures.

COLLEGE ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Assessment process	Programme requirements
Assessment planning	*Assessment plans are produced for students and programme areas showing the sequence of assessment activities against a curriculum map*
Designing assessment activities	*Assessment activities, such as assignments, work-based assessments, etc. are written according to AB guidelines*
Assessing student responses	*Assessment criteria are used accord to awarding body guidelines, OCN requirements or college-devised assessment objectives and criteria*
Feedback to students and recording	*Codes of practice, together with recording documents produced internally, guide student progress*
Internal verification or moderation	*Guidelines on internal verification or moderation are approved by AB external verifiers/moderators*
Accreditation	*Credit accumulation and certification are carried out according to the AB regulations*
Monitoring	*Monitoring is carried out as laid down by the college quality assurance procedures*

Section 3: Quality control

Developing quality control is an important issue for colleges. Whether quality assurance and control mechanisms are specified by external bodies or developed to meet internal requirements, they are important to the development of an assessment policy.

This section will focus on:

1 internal verification and moderation

2 internal verifier and assessor roles

3 developing assessment standards

4 internal appeals procedures

5 course review and evaluation

6 statistical quality assurance

3.1 INTERNAL VERIFICATION AND MODERATION

The examining/awarding bodies regulations require colleges to:

- conduct an induction and training programme for internal verifiers in accordance to agreed standards

- develop guidelines for each subject, programme or sector in accordance with awarding body regulations

Other procedures that need to be set in place are:

- the establishment of a verification sample base according to EVB guidelines to sample:
  essays/assessments or product evidence
  candidates
  recording documentation
  assessors
  an appeals system against assessment decisions (This is considered in more detail later in this section.)

- the monitoring of assessor and internal verifier judgements which can be determined by:

statistical monitoring of assessor and verifier judgements according to subject, programme area, level and form of provision

reviews based on student and staff evaluations together with internal and external verifier reports

3.2 INTERNAL VERIFIER AND ASSESSOR ROLES

The internal verifier or moderator plays a key role in determining the quality of assessment arrangements and decisions by overseeing the work of the assessment team. Their role is also to ensure that candidates and assessors have access to accurate and relevant information on assessment procedures.

In order to perform their duties effectively, the internal verifier or moderator needs the relevant experience, knowledge and qualifications to make accurate judgements on candidates' performance according to the nationally set standards. Within vocational programmes, internal verifiers will be qualified to, or working towards, TDLB unit D34, and, if appropriate, units D32 and D33 or GNVQ Planning and Assessment Units. Internal moderators will be expected to have been involved in training and attended examiners or regional moderators meetings as appropriate.

Moderators and verifiers are responsible for interpreting national standards and awarding body specifications in a consistent and reliable manner. They advise programme teams of the standards and specifications and co-ordinate assessment activities.

Internal verifiers need to ensure that the portfolios of evidence or coursework together with records of assessment meet awarding body requirements. They also liaise with the external verifier or moderator and ensure that all verification procedures and records are completed.

3.3 DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Many colleges have developed a set of standards for each stage of assessment. These standards set out the procedures to be followed by cross-college and programme teams.

The following example shows both a national requirement (from the FEFC) and the college assessment standards developed from this statement.

'that there are appropriate measures to assess and accredit prior learning and experiences' FEFC

- to give information on APL through Helpline, school offices, programme leaflets, etc. This should clearly state its optional nature and the commitment necessary from both learner and college.
- the use of an initial service (Helpline) to handle the maximum number of initial enquiries to ensure all are recorded, and any applicant needing impartial guidance is referred to College guidance workers. Systematic recording will be essential for tracking purposes
- at whatever time of year, the same procedures should apply to all students applying for entry to programmes

3.4 INTERNAL APPEALS PROCEDURE

The aim of an internal college appeals procedure is to allow students who believe they have a grievance concerning an assessment decision to obtain a review. This review can only focus on judgements made by college assessors and internal verifiers. Any grievance on summative assessments or final grading determined by the awarding bodies must follow an external appeals procedure as laid down by the awarding bodies.

A college appeals procedure therefore needs to set out:

- the aim of the appeals procedure
- the grounds on which an appeal can be made
- the general procedure for appealing
- the terminology used during the appeals procedure
- the composition and operation of the appeals committee

The following excerpt from a college appeals procedure describes grounds for appeal.

There are only two sets of circumstances in which the decision of a course team may be changed by a higher authority within the college. These are:

1. Material error or irregularity

This may occur in the following circumstances:

- if there has been an administrative error
- if the assessment was not conducted in accordance with the programme regulations
- if the college failed or refused to undertake assessment by a second examiner
- if any other material irregularity has occurred

2. Personal circumstances not known to the assessors or course team

If a student establishes to the satisfaction of the course team that their performance in the examination or other form of assessment was adversely affected by illness or other factors which they were unable for valid reasons to divulge prior to assessment. The student's request must be supported by medical certificates or other appropriate evidence.

3.5 Course review and evaluation

Many colleges have well-developed course monitoring and review processes that focus on specific aspects of the learning cycle. Course teams and students monitor and evaluate provision by means of:

- in-depth interviews
- meetings
- structured questionnaires

The outcome of this evaluation is then fed to quality review teams who in turn inform managers responsible for curriculum and assessment planning.

In many colleges an important issue in monitoring quality is the inter-relationship of various quality control systems. These can range from a college-wide implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) through to BSEN ISO 9000 and Investors in People (IiP). There needs to be a recognised procedure to feed recommendations from quality panels and other groups through to those responsible for strategic planning so that assessment practices are reviewed as an on-going part of the college quality cycle.

3.6 Statistical Quality Assurance

The development of management information systems in colleges has provided a means of evaluating assessment practices through statistical quality assurance. All colleges collect data on student achievements and non-completion that can provide information for strategic planning.

SQA can be used to monitor the quality of assessment practice in several ways. These include:

- monitoring entry level qualifications and final achievements
- correlating the results of diagnostic assessments at entry with final achievements and entry qualifications
- monitoring achievement levels in different subjects
- monitoring the awarding of grades across programme teams and awarding bodies
- correlating unit test results in GNVQs against tutor-predicted unit achievement and final portfolio grades
- monitoring student achievements across the qualification tracks to determine equal opportunities issues
- correlating entry level qualifications against FE and HE achievements and final careers or destinations

SQA can also provide a tool to measure consistency of verifier and assessor practice by evaluating whether particular teams or subject disciplines reveal a pattern of achievement above or below the norm or whether groups of students are achieving the norm for their group. Such analysis depends upon established national norms and discovering what variables might be operating so that the influencing factors can be identified.

Future developments in SQA are likely to include ways of monitoring student achievement to inform assessment and curriculum planning and measure value-added. *Quality and Value-added* (FEDA, 1995) summarises issues regarding quality systems and describes the approaches that colleges are developing to measure value added.

PART 2: Guidance on creating codes of practice

Part 2 of this report looks at the development of codes of practice on assessment within a college. It is divided into five sections:

SECTION 1: INITIAL ASSESSMENT	20
SECTION 2: ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING	24
SECTION 3: CORE SKILLS ASSESSMENT	30
SECTION 4: RECORDING ACHIEVEMENT	35
SECTION 5: ACCESS TO FAIR ASSESSMENT	40

Section 1: Initial assessment

This section looks at:

1 the purpose of initial assessment

2 elements of good practice

3 procedures and roles

4 monitoring initial assessment

1.1 The purpose of initial assessment

In most colleges initial assessment of students serves three purposes:

- initial guidance
- placement or selection assessment
- initial screening and diagnostic assessment

Each of these is considered in turn.

Initial guidance

The aim of initial guidance is to give advice to prospective students on course choice and employment opportunities. That advice needs to be impartial.

If assessment is used it can take the form of:

- computer or paper-based interest inventories
- aptitude testing
- one-to-one counselling

In some cases colleges, together with local TECs or employers, have established guidance centres or educational advice shops situated within the college or in the local community.

Placement or selection assessment

After general guidance and assessment, students are referred to specific vocational advisers, admissions tutors or programme leaders for an in-depth interview and assessment for placement on a course.

In order to place students on appropriate courses, the following sources of information are used:

- records of achievement
- interviews
- other information about experience and achievements

Some preliminary screening may take place at this stage, but detailed diagnostic assessment is usually carried out during the course induction.

Initial screening and diagnostic assessment

Initial screening is designed to identify a general skill level before carrying out more detailed programme-specific diagnostic assessment. It may be across the college or only at programme level.

Initial diagnostic assessment is the process of assessing a student's abilities and aptitudes in core skills and other areas so that an appropriate learning programme is designed for them.

Assessment will be based on nationally recognised diagnostic test instruments or internally devised tests and assignments to assess:

- core skills
- aptitude and interests
- preferred learning styles

Not all students will be tested for the same areas and competencies. Some students will require specialist assessment whereas others will be able to demonstrate their attainment levels with certificates or records.

After diagnostic assessment has taken place (usually within the first four weeks at college) a profile of the student's skills, aptitudes and interests and preferred learning style is compiled to advise them on an appropriate programme of study and learning support.

1.2 Elements of good practice

Most colleges combine the following practices in their initial assessment of students:

- a set procedure for arranging and conducting personal guidance interviews using suitably trained staff
- pre-entry taster sessions
- placement and selection interviews and discussions
- procedures for initial screening
- procedures for the accreditation of prior learning
- setting varied assessment activities to cover:
  the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology
  vocational aptitude and interests
  practical and other skills

1.3 Procedures and roles

A code on initial assessment will usually specify the following procedures:

- the relationship between initial assessment processes and on-course induction activity
- the management of information about individual students
- lines of communication between the college and the student
- the mechanisms for communicating between student support staff, vocational tutors and core skills tutors to ensure that information on learning support needs is acted upon and appropriate programmes of study are constructed

Although arrangements may vary between colleges, the code on initial assessment is likely to specify a range of roles. These are:

- **initial guidance** where staff must be available to offer accurate information and advice about college activities
- **careers guidance** so that students can relate their aspirations to the career opportunities available
- **specialised assessment** for those with learning difficulties and disabilities
- **co-ordination** of initial assessment processes

- **programme or course familiarisation** so that a prospective student can discuss the programme or see it at first hand, with support from a specialist tutor

1.4 MONITORING INITIAL ASSESSMENT

This will form part of the monitoring of all aspects of admissions procedures. It will be conducted through course review and evaluation within the quality cycle for the whole college and through the use of MIS data.

A checklist for monitoring quality assurance will cover:

- coherence and completeness of the structures through which the initial assessment processes are managed
- the quality of the co-ordination and management across the college and in relation to departments, faculties, courses or programmes
- effectiveness of the linkages between the various contributions to initial assessment processes
- presence and effectiveness of training and support mechanisms for those involved in initial assessment
- ease of access for learners to the various provisions within initial assessment processes
- quality of information provided to learners
- effectiveness of liaison between counsellors, tutors and others involved with guiding students
- the quality of records which are maintained
- effectiveness of the implementation of APL procedures
- appropriateness of the resources made available for the conduct of the initial assessment processes, including specialist assessment
- suitability of the assessment instruments used for the various diagnostic purposes within initial assessment

Section 2: Accreditation of prior learning

This section looks at: various aspects of the accreditation of prior learning (APL):

1 the purpose of APL

2 structures and procedures

3 roles and responsibilities of staff

4 monitoring APL

2.1 The purpose of APL

APL gives a student credit for current competence and prior achievements where they can provide suitable evidence. This enables the student to demonstrate competence or achievement in relation to a particular element or unit in an outcomes-based programme such as NVQ.

It is up to the awarding and accrediting bodies to determine whether APL is valid for particular qualifications. For some examinations, namely GCE A and AS and GCSE, APL is not a recognised form of accreditation. Similarly skill tests in some NVQs and mandatory unit tests in GNVQs limit the scope of APL.

A code of practice will therefore need to identify:

- the programmes or courses on which APL can be offered
- within each programme or course, the level at which APL operates:

  individual pieces of evidence, perhaps in relation to specific outcome statements, syllabus items or aspects of range

- elements, groups of outcome statements or broad areas of syllabus
- whole units or modules
- the basic requirements for the operation of APL. This will include a description of the quality, extent and authenticity of evidence required

2.2 Structures and procedures

A college code which considers the structure for managing APL is likely to define the following elements:

- the college APL model
- the APL process including:
  initial counselling
  identifying a student's development needs
  identifying sources of evidence
  preparing an action plan or assessment plan
  preparing and submitting a portfolio of evidence
- procedures for assessing and verifying the portfolio
- the role of APL advisers and assessors
- college documentation for APL
- college monitoring procedures

Once there is agreement on the structure and elements for APL provision, the stages for delivering it can be mapped out. These are:

- pre-entry interview
- identifying relevant experience
- negotiating a development plan
- gathering evidence
- pre-assessment
- assessment
- post-assessment guidance
- accreditation and verification

The following chart shows how this would work.

STAGE	CANDIDATE	GENERAL ADVISER	SPECIALIST ADVISER	ASSESSOR
Pre Entry	Requests information Produces CV	Requests CV Arranges interview Researches probable route to accreditation		
Identifying relevant experience & achievements	Reflects on experience Identifies appropriate award	Explains APL process Assists candidate to identify approp. award Advises candidate on type of evidence requirements		
Negotiation and devt planning	Identifies learning needs Agree a timescale Agree a devt plan	Negotiates stage one of devt plan with candidate Liaise with specialist adviser & assessor	Agrees a learning programme for full awards Negotiates stage two of devt plan Registers candidate with exam. officer	Agrees evidence requirements with specialist adviser
Gathering evidence	Implements devt plan Prepares portfolio	Monitors progress	Advises candidate on evidence requirements and structure of portfolio Liaises with assessor	

STAGE	CANDIDATE	GENERAL ADVISER	SPECIALIST ADVISER	ASSESSOR
Pre Assessment	Presents portfolio Agrees assessment plan		Reviews portfolio evidence Guides and advises on portfolio evidence Negotiates assessment plan	Agrees assessment plan
Assessment	Attends APL assessment Meeting with assessor			Assesses portfolio against APL claim Provides feedback to candidate and specialist adviser (assessor report)
Post-Assessment Guidance	Reviews personal goals	Assists candidates to refine development plan		
Accreditation & verification	Receives certificate			Liaise with external verifier Processes certification claim with examinations officer

2.3 Roles and responsibilities of staff

Many colleges have developed a two-tier model of APL services, recognising the roles of general and specialist advisers. The following example identifies what their roles may entail.

College example: Extract from an APL document

The General APL Adviser's role will be to:

- co-ordinate cross-college information from market sectors on APL provision
- provide a contact for corporate clients regarding the availability of APL in both the further and higher education sectors within the college
- provide information to potential candidates on the APL route to accreditation
- encourage candidates to reflect on and identify relevant past achievement to unit specification
- liaise with the specialist adviser on the candidate's behalf

The Specialist Adviser will:

- confirm the units or elements to be accredited through APL
- guide the candidates in matching APL evidence to statements of competence, achievement or learning outcomes
- identify further evidence requirements
- agree a learning programme for top-up training with the candidate
- arrange access to assessment where appropriate

2.4 Monitoring APL

Monitoring APL, as with initial assessment, will normally be conducted through course review and evaluation within the quality cycle for the whole college.

A checklist for monitoring APL procedures will establish that:

- information about APL is provided
- students have access to individual advice and guidance
- information which students are given regarding their eligibility for APL is accurate
- APL co-ordination and training are effective
- decisions are conveyed as quickly as possible
- evidence is assessed quickly, and students are supported in devising learning plans for the generation of further evidence
- APL is available and operates within policies for assessment and equal opportunities

Section 3: Core skills assessment

This section looks at:

1 the range of core skills assessment

2 delivery of core skills

3 the roles and responsibilities of staff

4 monitoring core skills provision

3.1 The purpose of core skills assessment

Core skills are generally regarded as an important aspect of learning.

There are however, various sets of core skills, more than one of which may be in use within a college.

Sets of core skills include:

- NCVQ core skills specifications
- CBI core skills elements
- BTEC common skills
- Crossmaps scheme skills

The three basic skills which most colleges include for assessment purposes are:

- communication
- application of number
- information technology

A further three skills are regarded as desirable for students:

- working with others
- problem solving
- personal integrity and values

NCVQ core skills are laid down as a set of specifications with elements, performance criteria, range and evidence indicators. They provide an opportunity for assessment and accreditation both within GNVQs and as separately accredited units on GCE A levels and other programmes.

3.2 Delivery of core skills

Core skills programmes can be delivered in several ways, including:

- discrete timetabled sessions

  These are likely to be managed by specialist tutors or support staff. They provide the opportunity for core skills development within a planned programme.

- integration into the mainstream provision

  This demands commitment to programme planning and team work to ensure that all assignments cover the core skills areas. It also requires close control over assessment, but does allow the embedding of core skills in the context of wider learning.

- provision through learning centres, possibly on a drop-in basis.

  If such sessions are provided it is essential that students' access and progress are monitored.

- distance learning or supported self study

  This approach is very flexible and can cater very precisely for individual needs. It does require close monitoring by staff.

Whatever delivery method is used, the code of practice should refer to the need for:

- assessing core skills during an induction programme
- devising learning programmes in relation to core skills
- establishing structures to be used for assessing core skill achievements
- recording and monitoring core skill achievements

3.3 The roles and responsibilities of staff

The code of practice on core skills assessment needs to state where and how specialist tutors are to be employed. It also needs to state what form of training or accreditation will be required for staff involved in the delivery and assessment of core skills.

Key issues are likely to be:

- programme co-ordinator or tutor responsibilities

  This is particularly important where core skills are embedded in wide tasks that require a number of tutors for assessment.

- core skills tutor responsibilities

  These may include:
  developing a programme of core skills support
  developing flexible learning materials
  planning discrete or drop-in workshop provision
  contributing to the development of learning activities which integrate core skills

- the training needs of those involved in the delivery and assessment of core skills

- the management of college core skills provision to ensure that:sufficient funds are allocated to develop learning resource centres and provide suitable equipment

- adequate time allocated on student timetables for core skills development and assessment

- cross-college co-ordination and verification, which must:

  — ensure the delivery and assessment of core skills is consistent
  — provide advice and guidance to core skills tutors

- provide support for the verification of core skills assessment

College example: core skills document extract

The following example shows one college's approach to core skills and focuses on the entry and on-programme stages.

College documentation lays down in detail the:

Course Team responsible
Faculty Co-ordinators' responsibilities
Heads of Faculty/School responsibilities
Core Skills Verifier responsibilities

This documentation then looks at assessment based on NCVQ national core skills. This extract looks at entry and programme stages:

On entry

Each student to be given a clear introductory explanation of core skills and their relevance or importance to the programme.

Initial diagnostic assessment to be undertaken in all core areas.

Individually negotiated action plans to cater for student needs/aspirations. Where necessary, additional support will be provided and detailed within individual student records.

On programme

Explanation and interpretation to be provided of core skills requirements

Students provided with a copy of all five levels of the core skills

Opportunities for attainment at different levels to be clearly explained

Core skills specialist to develop skills optimum assessment level attainable by each individual

Identification of possible assessment opportunities to be available for all students

Student awareness of diverse evidence-gathering opportunities to be raised

Individual assessment plans to be negotiated with each student. Additional support to be provided where necessary.

The monitoring, recording and reviewing of core skills progress to be undertaken.

Core skills specialists to liaise with other course team members to ensure complete coverage of PCs and range

Additional evidence gathering opportunities to be provided where core skills integration is not possible.

Core skills specialists to be involved by the rest of the course team in agreed grading processes

Core skills specialist to contribute towards the development of portfolio building skills

3.4 Monitoring core skills provision

Monitoring will normally be conducted through course review and evaluation within the quality cycle for the whole college. A checklist for monitoring core skills provision is concerned with the:

- effectiveness of the identification of needs in relation to core skills at induction and during the course of the student's programmes
- quality of the incorporation of the core skills into learning programmes
- effectiveness of monitoring of individual progress
- availability of core skills progression routes
- availability of resources
- effectiveness of cross-college verification and co-ordination of core skills provision

Other information on core skills

Enhancing GCE A level Programmes (FEDA, 1995) examines the curriculum offer to 16 -19 year old students. It looks at a range of learning opportunities which enhance the learning programme and includes examples of published lists of core skills. The information sources at the end of this document refer to material used by colleges for developing and assessing core skills.

Section 4: Recording achievement

This section looks at:

1 the purpose of recording achievement

2 activities involved in recording achievement

3 elements of good practice

4 monitoring procedures

4.1 The purpose of recording achievement

A record of achievement, and in particular the National Record of Achievement, is best seen as a continuous document for the student. It is started before the student reaches college, is enhanced by their time spent at college, and continues to be updated after they leave college.

Recording achievement is generally accepted as having four main purposes:

- to recognise achievement

  Learning and experience gained by each individual can be recognised and credited by themselves, tutors, training providers, etc.

- to motivate and aid personal development

  If the individual is able to recognise and evaluate their own performance and needs, this can help them to set realistic goals for achievement.

- to help in the organisation of the content and delivery of learning and experience

  Colleges are better able to plan and provide co-ordinated learning programmes if they have a clear understanding of both the achievements and needs of their own students.

- to act as an ongoing record

  Students leaving college should have a usable summary of their achievements which can be shown to employers, HE tutors, careers advisers, etc. and can be used as a base for recording further achievements.

4.2 ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN RECORDING ACHIEVEMENT

The process of recording achievement is likely to involve the student and their tutors in a continuous process of reviewing, assessing and recording achievement. Activities include:

- Reviewing evidence of achievement

  Several approaches can be taken, including:
  one-to-one review with a tutor or supervisor
  self review
  peer or small group review

- Action planning

  This is the link to stages in the learning process and encourages students to set learning targets in the context of longer term goals.

- Assessment

  This is the process of collecting and evaluating the student's achievements. It should:

  be planned and relate to specific activities
  be integrated into the learning process
  be clearly understood by the student

- Continuous recording

  Recording achievement is a continuous process for the student and the learning programme needs to make provision for the on-going nature of this activity.

- Summary recording

  This provides a statement of a student's achievements at a point in time. A college will usually specify when summary records are to be completed and provide the resources needed for their compilation.

4.3 Elements of good practice

Recording of achievement can be incorporated into three distinct stages for planning purposes:

- at entry
- on-programme
- at exit

Teams need to ensure that assessment, action planning and recording achievement are integrated. This will help co-ordinate some of the demands placed on students and tutors, and help students to understand the different aspects of their learning programme.

Colleges need to specify certain processes in order to facilitate each stage. These may include:

- allocating time for staff and students to undertake assessment, action planning and recording achievement
- specifying the recording mechanisms to be used
- providing support structures so that staff can help students
- ensuring that mechanisms for co-ordination and monitoring are in place

Colleges also need to specify which aspects of recording are to managed on a cross-college basis and which are to be undertaken by course teams.

On the next page is an example from a college records of achievement document.

The college will formulate an overall policy for Records of Achievement based on the experience of staff involved in the curriculum development project.

The college ROA policy will cover the following areas:

- **Admissions procedures** — ROAs may be used to assess a candidate's all round suitability for entry. Arrangements must, therefore, be made to encourage students to present their ROAs at the interview stage.

- **Induction** — ROAs will provide the documentation for Action Planning and APL. As more schools begin to offer vocational courses the need to build on students' past experience becomes more critical.

- **Delivery** — there are a number of issues raised by the introduction of the ROA in terms of delivery of the curriculum:

  Assessment is an integral part of the learning process. To maintain appropriate records the student must be aware for the performance required to achieve success. Clear statements of assessment criteria must, therefore, be explicit to the student.

  Core skills — to record a student's overall performance the accreditation of core skills must be addressed. It may be possible for core skills statements to be adopted from GNVQ criteria or for the college to develop its own statement statements of competence and give local accreditation.

  Flexible delivery — the ROA allows for accreditation of prior experience, therefore, students must be entitled to flexible programmes. Training credits have already highlighted this particular problem as students/employers only wish to access parts of a qualification.

- **Reviewing** — the process of updating and maintaining records requires a strong tutorial system to monitor and review students' progress across a whole programme.

- **Verification and validation** — the function of the internal verification panel would be to monitor the quality of ROAs in terms of both process and product. In this role the panel would need to agree, and establish, the criteria to be adhered to by each market sector in the management of students' ROAs throughout a programme of learning.

  The panel would provide a mechanism whereby the quality of ROAs can be moderated. One the verification panel was established an d functioning, validation may be sought from an external body. The composition of such a body would reflect links with HE and employers.

4.4 Monitoring procedures

Quality assurance procedures need to cover the:

- coherence and completeness of the co-ordination and management structures
- effectiveness of the linkages with the designed learning activities
- presence and effectiveness of training and support mechanisms
- effectiveness of liaison between staff and students
- care with which the record of achievement is used at entry and exit
- appropriateness of the resources made available

The quality of the processes will also depend on:

- the efficiency with which they are seen to support learning
- their degree of integration into mainstream college teaching and learning
- ensuring that they are not seen to be imposing an unreasonable workload

Section 5: Access to fair assessment

This final section of guidance in creating codes of practice looks at an issue raised in the introduction of this report, namely that assessment for all students should promote equality of opportunity.

If assessment is to provide proper support for learning it must be available:

'to all learners in the college, as an entitlement under a college policy of equal opportunities in learning, and irrespective of disability, gender, ethnic origin or any other aspect of personal status' (College extract)

This section looks at:

1 resources to support fair assessment

2 elements of good practice

3 monitoring access to fair assessment

4 college example — Fair Assessment Code

5.1 Resources to support fair assessment

These will include:

- mechanisms within the college to support assessment activity
- training for all assessors to include guidance on the need to avoid discriminatory practices
- access to appropriate resources (such as equipment and materials) for those with learning difficulties

In addition staff require time and resources to plan and conduct appropriate assessment and ensure that students are not disadvantaged by language or cultural barriers in their completion of assignments.

5.2 Elements of good practice

A number of basic requirements need to be met if the assessment process is to support learning:

- the assessment must be confidential and respect the dignity of the student
- all students should have equal access to non-discriminatory assessment which focuses on their individual needs
- the assessment must be valid in relation to the programme requirements and be clearly explained to students so that they understand the required response

5.3 Monitoring access to fair assessment

Monitoring, as in the previous sections, will normally be conducted through course review and evaluation within the quality cycle. Monitoring may also be conducted by an individual with responsibility for co-ordinating assessment on a college-wide basis.

It will cover:

- the provision and take-up of assessor training
- ensuring that assessors have access to support and training with regard to equal opportunities in assessment
- checking that suitable resources are available for staff and students
- ensuring that students have access to appeals procedures
- reviewing assessment criteria and the marking of student work to ensure non-discriminatory practice
- monitoring the work of internal and external verifiers and moderators, so that difficulties with assessment can be detected and good practice extended

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3.4 College example: Extract from a Fair Assessment Code

This code applies to all assessment activities within the control of the college and its staff and should be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities policy.

- Assessment is a natural and important aspect of learning. It enables both the learner and the tutor to identify learning that has taken place and to plan the next stages to motivate and encourage developmental progress.
- The college will assist students in their progress in learning and accreditation through timely and appropriate use of assessments. Students will be partners in the assessment process. Feedback and support will be provided, and opportunities for self-assessment will be encouraged wherever appropriate.
- Students are entitled to participate in assessment processes and procedures which are of themselves fair and relevant. Such assessments will be devised to ensure that they are:

  valid—testing that which intended to be tested

  reliable— differentiating between students on assessment criteria alone and ensuring the consistency of judgements

  appropriate— in terms of content to that which has been taught and in method to the way the programme has been delivered

  planned— as part of a published programme of coursework/ homework or evidence opportunities

  marked— against stated criteria made available to students

  designed—to provide equality of opportunity regardless of ethnic, gender, or social class differences

  structured— to enable as far as possible, those with either physical or learning disability to participate without disadvantage or prejudice

  informative—for staff and students to be aware of the progress towards accreditation

- The responsibility of students to meet the requirements of the assessment will be stated and will be matched by a specific date for the return of the work, where relevant, and/or result, together with appropriate feedback

PART 3: Implementing policy and codes of practice at programme level

Part 3 of this report looks at the way an assessment policy can be implemented at the programme level. This final part focuses attention on the clarification of assessment procedures for students and tutors and is divided into three sections:

SECTION 1: ASSESSMENT ENTITLEMENTS AND REGULATIONS	44
SECTION 2: ASSESSMENT	47
SECTION 3: ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND GRADING CRITERIA	50

Section 1: Assessment entitlements and regulations

Students need to be aware of their assessment entitlements and the assessment regulations that apply to their course of study. The programme team must ensure students get guidance on awarding body regulations which cover:

- the syllabus content or outcome-based specifications
- an induction on the assessment model and approach underpinning their course of study
- the grading and marking criteria
- the required standard of response to achieve a successful outcome of study
- the verification and appeals procedure regarding assessment

The assessment regulations which need to be produced are specific to each qualification and are as follows:

GCE A/AS Assessment

Student guidelines would outline the:

- syllabus content and assessment requirements and weightings regarding final examination and coursework
- knowledge, skills and understanding to be developed
- requirements for the presentation of essays, reports and other material for coursework
- requirements for end-of-module assessment where appropriate
- marking and grading criteria and matrices for teacher-based assessment
- moderation procedures for teacher-based assessment
- final examination regulations and procedures

GCSE (National Curriculum subjects)

Student guidelines would outline the:

- subject criteria in line with the new subject orders
- learning descriptors and attainment targets
- knowledge, skills and understanding to be developed
- weightings for coursework and final examination
- marking criteria specified in the syllabus and the marking scheme to guide teacher-based assessment
- moderation procedures for coursework assessment
- final examination regulations and procedures

GNVQ

Student guidelines would outline the:

- unit specifications for mandatory, optional and additional units and the rules of combination
- core skills specifications and levels
- internal assessment and guidance regarding portfolio presentation
- external assessment with regard to unit tests and the college procedures for administering unit tests
- internal verification procedures
- operation and implementation of the grading criteria and themes for portfolio grading

Student guidelines would outline the:

- lead body standards
- key roles and unit specifications
- requirements for APL, direct evidence of performance and simulated evidence in realistic work environments
- mastery of occupational competence requirements

If students are not on a certificated course they are still entitled to guidance on the areas of knowledge and skills they will be covering and any method of assessment. This is often done by producing handbooks or guides given out to all students during induction to ensure that they understand the assessment method.

Section 2: Assessment planning

Assessment planning is central to successful learning for students. A clear sequence of essays, assignments and other tasks avoids:

- the seemingly endless recording of achievement at the expense of learning
- bunching essays and assignments which can lead to students dropping out
- over-assessment

In order to plan an assessment programme, teaching staff need to co-ordinate their teaching and assessment programme. If they do not, there is a danger that areas of knowledge or assignments may be duplicated and 'gap-filling' may become accepted practice where evidence is lacking.

The assessment plan can be divided into two areas:

- a student assessment plan showing the essays, assignments or tasks required together with details on how progress is reviewed
- a programme assessment plan showing assessment activities which cover the qualification specifications or syllabus requirements

Tracking documents to record student achievement are likely to form part of the student assessment plan.

THE STUDENT ASSESSMENT PLAN

Students need an assessment plan which they can use to record their progress and negotiate future work. The plan should raise students' awareness of their knowledge and skills, and evaluate their future needs in discussion with tutors.

The plan may be attached to a student action plan or be a single document which allows for the planning and recording of learning and assessment.

THE PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT PLAN

Many colleges use a grid or matrix system to ensure that an assessment programme covers all the elements or areas required for a specific qualification. The assessment plan would log:

- the phasing of assessments to show the date, week, phase or duration of an assessment activity
- the areas covered by an assessment which would include the knowledge, skills and understanding

- the assessment context to cover the conditions under which the assessment is to be completed (college workshop, classroom, workplace, realistic work environment etc)

- the objectives or elements from the syllabus or qualification specifications which the assignment covers

Below is an extract from a two-year plan for a GNVQ manufacturing course showing how a programme assessment plan may be laid out.

COLLEGE EXAMPLE: TWO-YEAR PLAN FOR A MANUFACTURING COURSE

Week			PHASE 1			
1-2			*Introduction to the course and manufacturing*			
3-16	Manufacturing systems	Process operations	Work practice	Optional unit	Additional units	Practical work
17-18			Phase assignments			Practical assignment work
Week			PHASE 2			
19			*Review*			
20-34	Design	Communicate product design	Environmental impact	Optional unit	Additional units	Practical work
35-36			Phase assignments			Practical assignment work
			PHASE 3			
1			*Induction to second year*			
2-15	Production costs & schedules	Quality & control	Optional unit	Optional unit	Additional units	Practical work
17-18			Phase assignments			Practical assignment work
			PHASE 4			
19			*Review*			
20-34			Major project assignments			Practical assignment
35-36			Review and final assessments			work

TRACKING DOCUMENTS

Student tracking documents need to:

- meet external verifier or moderator approval for accreditation
- comply with the college code of practice on recording achievement

Tracking documents should include:

AT ENTRY
the students initial assessment profile which records the recommendations regarding learning support and APL

ON-PROGRAMME
the results of assessment decisions for portfolio or coursework assessment which would indicate:

- unit accreditation
- project grades
- assignment grades

A cumulative record of student progress should be kept to record coverage of the syllabus or unit specifications by the group cohort.

EXIT
the achievements and final destinations for all students. Where a course of study is not certificated, final course review sheets should record students' perceptions of their achievements.

Many colleges are using computerised systems to log student progress which allow reports to be generated on the progress of particular cohorts. The NCET guide and the Employment Department report *A Directory of Computer — Assisted Assessment* (see Appendix B - Sources of Information) evaluate present systems.

Section 3: Assessment design and grading criteria

All programme teams should have clear criteria for designing and marking internal assessment tasks. These criteria should be based on the accrediting and awarding body guidelines for certificated programmes and college devised criteria for pre-access, adult returner or other non-certificated courses.

ASSESSMENT DESIGN CRITERIA

Design criteria lay down the framework which govern the assessment of essays, assignments or other tasks. They relate to such matters as:

- providing instructions which are clear and appropriate to the student cohort
- ensuring that the assessment activity is suitable in relation to the skills or knowledge being tested
- ensuring that the assessment task does not discriminate against students because of its context or cultural setting

Many colleges now use a front sheet for assignments to ensure uniformity in assignment design. A typical front sheet will include:

- the name of the college, the student and the course
- the title and number of the assignment
- the submission date
- the areas being assessed (based on a map of the curriculum))
- the assessment and grading criteria
- assessor and student comments

GRADING AND MARKING CRITERIA

All certificated programmes have grading criteria laid down by the accrediting or awarding body. These are:

NVQ

Achievement is based on the mastering and successful demonstration of all the unit specifications and job roles.

GNVQ

There are four grading criteria and themes which go across all programme areas. Students can achieve a merit or distinction grade. Students have to present a portfolio of evidence indicating coverage of the vocational and core unit specifications.

GCSE

Grade descriptors are laid down for grades A* - G and guidance on establishing grade boundaries informs grading practice. For coursework assessment, tutors are expected to follow mark schemes and marking criteria. Tiered papers have been developed for bands within the grades.

GCE A AND AS

These examinations have similar grading based on grade descriptors and marking schemes as for GCSEs.

COLLEGE EXAMPLE: CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING COURSEWORK IN GCE A-LEVEL HOME ECONOMICS:

MARKS	1(a) ANALYSIS (5% MARKS)
1-2	Analyse a situation/task in order to identify some factors and recognises some inter-relationships; shows a limited understanding of some of the opportunities presented for practical and investigative work relevant to the area of study
3-4	Analyses a situation/task in order to identify relevant factors, and recognises inter-relationships; shows an understanding of some of the opportunities presented for practical and investigative work relevant to the area of study.
5	Analyses a situation/task in order to identify the factors involved and recognises complex inter-relationships; shows a clear understanding of the full scope of the opportunities presented for practical and investigative work relevant to the area of study.

MARKS	1(d) PLANNING (5% MARKS)
1-23	Indicates some of the materials and methods to be used. Little detail.
3-4	Indicates materials and methods to be used, with some detail.
5	Indicates clearly specific materials and methods to be used, with relevant details.

MARKS	1(b) ANALYSIS (5% MARKS)
1-2	Researches from a limited number of sources and selects background information.
3-4	Researches from a range of sources and selects appropriate background information.
5	Researches from a wide variety of sources and selects appropriate background information.

MARKS	1(c) PLANNING (10% MARKS)
1-3	Interprets evidence in a limited manner in order to make simple judgements and choices.
4-7	Interprets evidence as a basis for making judgements and choices.
8-10	Interprets evidence as a basis for making valid judgements and the most relevant choices.

Appendix A: National body requirements

Appendix A describes the national body requirements with regard to assessment:

- Charter for Further Education (DFEE)
- Inspection Framework, Assessing Achievement circular (FEFC)
- Accrediting body quality criteria
- Awarding body centre approval criteria and verification procedures
- TDLB standards, assessor and verifier units and GPA units
- FEFC funding methodology
- FEFC performance indicators and data collection requirements

The Charter for Further Education (DFE) and College Charters

In the *DFEE Charter for FE* the Department indicates the rights that students have in respect of the teaching and effective management of learning and makes specific assessment requirements. The key points covered relate to the following :

- the preparation and assessment of assignments and coursework to be completed within a set time
- the need for all courses to meet the assessment requirements for the qualification in hand
- the opportunity to build up credits towards a qualification
- the provision of appropriate well structured work placements as assessment opportunities
- the development of study skills, for example, using library and computing facilities effectively
- the recording and reporting of student progress

The generic principles and processes identified by the *Charter for FE* can therefore be seen to reinforce the need for :

- assessment planning
- clarification of assessment regulations
- credit accumulation and transfer
- work experience as an assessment opportunity
- assessment of study skills or independent learning or core skills
- recording, reviewing and reporting of assessment decisions and achievements

Inspection Framework

Assessing Achievement FEFC Circular 93/28

The inspection guidelines are set out under seven headings:

- responsiveness and range of provision
- governance and management
- students' recruitment, guidance and support
- teaching and the promotion of learning
- students' achievements
- quality assurance
- resources

The assessment requirements are that :

- **impartial guidance** is provided
- arrangements are made to **assess and accredit prior learning and experience**
- effective **induction** programmes for new students are in place
- **procedures to facilitate transfer** between programmes where appropriate are established
- **records of achievement are maintained**
- **equality of opportunity is promoted** and discriminatory practices are avoided

Under the guidelines related to the teaching and the promotion of learning and students' achievements, programme teams in the area of assessment will be expected to :

- devise coherent programmes which meet the needs of students and have clearly identified aims and objectives which are shared with students
- keep **records of students' achievements**, regularly inform them of their progress and identify targets for further progress
- **assess and meet the needs of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties**

- devise teaching and learning schemes which:
  - include a **regular schedule of setting, marking and returning work** to students within agreed deadlines
  - **devise assessments which are at an appropriate standard** and test the achievements of all agreed aims and objectives of the programme
  - **ensure that assessments are consistent and fair**, that appropriate appeals procedures are in place, and that achievement is certificated where appropriate
- ensure that **students' responses to internal assessments are at an appropriate standard**
- that the programme targets for success rates in external examinations and other **value- added ratings** are achieved

The college QA mechanisms will need to ensure that at the programme level the institutions' policy on quality is supported by the **regular production of reports**. These reports should incorporate statistics on student progression and achievement and evaluative comments on the quality of all aspects of the programmes from a variety of sources including students, internal and external assessors and, where appropriate, employers and other clients.

The inspection framework reinforces the Charter statements and the process of assessment planning, recording and review. The framework requires colleges to make provision for the following:

- the accreditation of prior learning
- induction
- assessment planning and target setting
- measures to ensure consistency
- recording of achievement
- appeals procedures
- access to fair assessment
- procedures to facilitate transfer
- the monitoring of student success rates and value-added measurements

Accrediting Body Quality Criteria

The various codes of practice, common accords and quality criteria which have been produced by the accrediting bodies, NCVQ and SCAA, are a move towards the standardisation of awarding body practice to ensure that there is parity between centre assessment procedures.

NCVQ

GNVQ Quality enhancement programme

NCVQ and the awarding bodies have embarked on a quality enhancement programme to strengthen GNVQ quality assurance systems. The programme includes:

- establishing a framework for quality criteria
- agreeing minimum quality requirements that centres must meet with regard to centre approval
- centralised external verifier training and a review of internal verification procedures
- analysis of the external test results and further training of item writers
- scrutiny exercises to compare standards across centres and awarding bodies

NCVQ have introduced an additional grading criterion for GNVQs which has been sent to all centres and will be producing further exemplification material. A review of the GNVQ recording procedures is also taking place with the aim of reducing the time spent on the recording of assessment. A new GNVQ Code of Practice has been published which incorporates the existing code on external assessment and indicates internal assessment arrangements.

GNVQ Quality Framework

The GNVQ Quality Framework has been jointly produced by NCVQ, BTEC, City and Guilds and RSA Examinations Board. The Framework consists of quality indicators and related guidance on designing, delivering and assuring the quality of GNVQ courses. It is published in two parts:

- Part A presents the quality indicators
- Part B includes detailed guidance alongside each quality indicator NCVQ have set up Local Quality Assurance teams to ensure the effective operation of awarding body schemes

Awarding Bodies Common Accord

The Awarding Bodies Common Accord published by NCVQ in August 1993 is intended to support the standardisation of NVQs offered by the various awarding bodies that the Council accredits. The general principles of the Common Accord have been subsumed into the new NVQ Guide which was published in January 1995 by NCVQ.

The following chart is an extract from the Common Accord indicating centre approval verification criteria.

Centre approval verification criteria

The following criteria are intended as the reference point against which a centre's application for approval to offer NVQ assessment should be judged and its implementation monitored. These criteria are provisional in nature and will be developed further in conjunction with the awarding bodies.

Management systems

1 The centre specifies and maintains an effective system for managing NVQs

i) The centre has an explicit policy for promoting implementing NVQs.
ii) NVQ related roles, responsibilities and authority are clearly defined.
iii) A member of senior management formally approves the centre's agreement with the awarding body.
iv) The recording system design enables candidates' achievements to be evaluated in relation to the centre's EO policy.
v) Procedures are specified for communicating with senior management about the implementation of NVQs.
vi) There are procedures for communicating within the NVQ 'team'.
vii) There are procedures for liaising with satellite and associated sites.
viii) Resources required by candidates with special needs are identified and are made available.
xi) Procedures for maintaining and updating databases (IT or manual) are specified.

2 There are effective administrative arrangements

i) Accurate records of the assessment of candidates are maintained
ii) Effective liaison with other assessment sites and associated organisations maintained
iii) Awarding body administrative requirements are fulfilled promptly and correctly.

Physical resources

1 Sufficient resources are available to assess candidates for NVQs

i) Resource needs are identified in relation to awarding body requirements and are made available
ii) There are arrangements to ensure that equipment, procedures and accommodation are safe and fit for use

Staff resources

1 Staff resources are sufficient to deliver assessment for NVQs

i) Sufficient time is available to provide information, advice and counselling for all NVQ candidates
ii) There are sufficient competent and qualified assessors to assess for the qualification
iii) There are sufficient competent and qualified internal verifiers to ensure quality assessments
iv) Internal verifiers have appropriate access to assessors
v) Sufficient time is allowed for administering the programme
vi) Staff development needs are systematically reviewed
vii) An NVQ staff development programme is provided

Assessment

1 A system for valid and reliable assessment to national standards is specified and maintained

i) Information, advice and guidance on assessment is provided to NVQ candidates and to potential NVQ candidates.
ii) There is a system for coordinating assessment
iii) There is a system for reviewing the quality and fairness of the assessment process
iv) There is an effective appeals procedures for candidates
v) An appropriate range of assessment methods is used
vi) Unit certification is available on demand

Quality assurance and control

1 An effective system for quality assurance and control is maintained.

i) An effective system for quality assurance of assessment is in place
ii) There are effective procedures for the internal verification of NVQs
iii) The quality of assessment is systematically reviewed and monitored

Equal opportunities and access

1 There is clear commitment to equal opportunities

i) There is an explicit policy on equal opportunities
ii) Information, guidance and advice on equal opportunities is provided for new candidates, staff and work providers
iii) There is an action plan for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy
iv) Unit certification is available
v) There is a system for monitoring and evaluating achievement rates of candidates in relation to equal opportunities
vi) Requirements of special needs candidates for assessment are identified and met where possible

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School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA)

In March 1992 SEAC produced the Principles for A and AS examinations to ensure that the various examination boards conform to a set of general principles in the design of GCEs. These principles require:

- that there should be adequate breadth, depth and balance in a subject syllabus
- that learning and assessment requirements are specified in sufficient detail to secure rigour
- that AS levels should occupy half the study time of A level syllabuses
- that any course made up of modules is demonstrably coherent
- that syllabuses provide sufficient basis for further study at degree level or equivalent
- that assessment should be predominantly by means of external terminal examination with coursework limited to a maximum of 20% of the total marks available in most subjects
- that modular syllabuses include a terminal examination and a substantial element of external assessment

A *Code of Practice* to guide A and AS examinations has been published to guide examining boards in determining syllabus content and assessment practice.

The GCSE *Mandatory Code of Practice* was published in January 1993 and revised in March 1995 to govern the operation of GCSE examinations. The Code outlines:

- the responsibilities of the examining groups and the examining group personnel
- the setting of question papers and mark schemes for terminal examinations and end of module tests
- the requirements for coursework assessment and moderation
- the setting of grade boundaries
- the assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar

The Code clarifies the role of each examining group's governing council and the roles of the various examiners and moderators.

Awarding Body Centre Approval Criteria and Verification Procedures

Vocational programmes

Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC)

Centre Approval Criteria

Centre approval forms (the C forms) require colleges to indicate the procedures which will be in place under the following headings :

- quality assurance and control (systems)
- resources (staff)
- resources (physical)
- assessment
- equal opportunities

Centres which wish to run new qualifications need to complete the Qual. forms for qualification approval which cover the following areas :

- qualification structure
- quality assurance and control
- staff resources
- physical resources
- learning
- assessment

Booklets providing guidance on how to complete the centre and qualification approval forms are available to centres.

External Verification

In September 1994 a new system of external verification was introduced by BTEC with the employment of eight full-time regional quality evaluators. In 1995 Case Managers will be replacing the regional quality evaluators.

The external verifiers will be employed on a part-time basis and drawn from former experienced moderators/external verifiers. There are approximately 1,200 external verifiers all of whom are required to be qualified to TDLB D35 (see section on TDLB standards). Four hundred new staff as EVs for GNVQs have been selected and trained. The verifier will work closely with particular centres to check the quality and consistency of assessment and sample student's portfolio evidence. All external verifiers are required to attend annual training days. In reporting to BTEC and to centres the external verifiers are currently focusing on 4 areas :quality assurance and control; resources; learning; assessment.

Centres are also guided by BTEC's quality criteria, each supported by a number of quality indicators, as explained in *Quality: Building it in and Checking it Out* and qualification guides (e.g.the *Implementing BTEC GNVQs* guide) and external verifier reports which include suggested evidence. Instructions for the operation of unit testing are also available for GNVQs.

Two new handbooks have been published giving guidance on internal and external verification (see Appendix B, **Sources of information)**.

City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI)
Centre Approval Criteria

The document, *Policy and Practice for Schemes, Awards and Certification, Assessment and Quality Assurance*, indicates the procedures that are to operate on all schemes. There are common centre approval criteria for all NVQs, in line with those laid down by NCVQ in the Common Accord. There is a common system for all GNVQs as indicated in the revised GNVQ Handbook and application forms (described below).

Centre approval criteria will be established for each award and presented in the scheme documentation. The criteria will detail access, assessment and quality assurance requirements.

Applications for **NVQ centre approval** will be considered against a set of criteria covering

- management systems
- physical resources
- staff resources
- assessment systems
- quality assurance and control
- equal opportunities

Approval will be granted for a fixed period, normally for four years, and an external verifier will monitor the centre to ensure that it continues to meet the approval criteria.

The roles of the assessor, internal verifier and external verifier are outlined for all schemes, together with guidance on the purposes,principles and strategies for assessment and the certification of awards.

The application form for **GNVQ centre approval** covers the following areas:

- management systems
- administrative arrangements
- equal opportunities
- target groups
- delivery
- physical resources

- staff resources
- quality assurance
- linked institutions

Notes on completion of application forms are available together with the revised GNVQ Handbook for centre support.

External verification

The *Policy and Practice for Schemes* document describes the centre monitoring procedure in the section on quality assurance. It explains that if an award is offered to a large number of centres, there will be a Regional Lead Verifiers and local External Verifiers who will operate as a national team and network. Monitoring the awards will include the collection of data on selection, training and performance of assessors, internal and external verifiers.

GNVQ verification involves a team of approximately 70 external verifiers on contract to City and Guilds 2 days a week. The Regional Lead verifiers give a regional perspective on GNVQ developments and feedback issues to the National Verification Manager. There are also specialist verifiers who give advice to a team of specialist advisers on unit verification and other subject specific topics.

External Verifiers are required by City and Guilds to verify assessment practice, including sampling student's work and college procedures and in so doing provide information, advice and support to college staff. An action plan is agreed between the external verifier and the college staff at the end of the visit. A set of forms used by the external verifier is included which covers the areas as indicated above.

City and Guilds provides guidance through its scheme booklets. In some areas implementation reports are available to help centres: they describe how similar centres have introduced and run the scheme. Additional support documents exist through the Assessment Resource Book series. The first book of this series gives guidance on the production of portfolio evidence for NVQs and looks at the rules of evidence and contains worked examples.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS EXAMINATIONS BOARD (RSA)
Centre Approval Criteria

In 1996 a new application form for centre approval will be introduced which will be a common system for the approval and registration of all schemes. All centres will be required to complete an application form which will combine the functions of the centre registration application and centre evaluation form. An evaluation visit is made to all prospective new centres and if necessary to existing centres who wish to extend their schemes.

The process of evaluation which leads to centre approval seeks responses from centres on the following:

- what experience the centre has of competence based vocational qualifications
- how equality of opportunity and open access will be maintained
- whether the institution is operating in partnership with other organisations and what work placement arrangements may exist
- resource allocations
- target student population
- experience and qualifications of assessors
- staff deployment,training, coordination and liaison
- recording, reviewing and monitoring procedures

On receipt of the completed candidate registration form the RSA will issue the CARs, cumulative assessment records, which is the candidate tracking record, although centres may use alternative means of recording assessment decisions provided this has been approved by the awarding body.

Brief notes are available on the completion of application forms and there are GNVQ Centre Guidelines.

External verification

The RSA has regional managers, chief verifiers and specialist external verifiers. All verifiers must attend at least three meetings each year in order to continue in their function as verifiers.

All new centres will receive an evaluation visit prior to being granted approval by the awarding body verifiers. Each centre will be visited at least three times during a twelve month period, and additional visits will be made if required. During the visit the external verifier will monitor and sample candidates' assessment evidence and the internal quality assurance systems, and where appropriate, observe the assessment process. The cumulative assessment records (CARs) and portfolios of evidence of candidates will be sampled.

After each visit a Verifier report is completed, a copy of which is sent to the centre. The external verifier must sign and date Certification records for candidates which have been prepared by the internal verifier after checking their validity.

GCSE AND A AND AS EXAMINATIONS

The examining groups and examination boards each have separate arrangements for the registration of centres wishing to provide GCSE and A and AS examinations. In general, there is no formal centre approval process similar to that for GNVQ or NVQ centre status as exists with the vocational awarding bodies. Schools or colleges who come under the LEA, Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) or FEFC inspectorate must register their students with the examining group/board and indicate in the registration letter or form the security arrangements to be made regarding the examination process. All centres must abide by the examining groups regulations and where moderation of internal coursework is involved, schools and colleges must demonstrate moderation procedures are in place which are then validated by external moderators. The GCSE Mandatory Code of Practice states the requirements regarding moderation, and examination board regulations guide A-level moderation.

The registration or application forms to become a centre for examinations in general require applicants to provide information on the status of the institution (type of comprehensive school, independent school, CTC, type of college); the nature of control (LEA maintained, independent, aided/voluntary, CTC, or grant maintained); the total number and age range of the candidates and the examinations to be offered. Instructions for the conduct of examinations are issued which in general cover such areas as: the safe custody of the examination papers, accommodation, invigilation arrangements, and the procedures during the examination.

GPA UNITS AND TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT LEAD BODY ASSESSMENT AND VERIFICATION STANDARDS

GNVQ PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT UNITS (GPA UNITS)

The GNVQ Planning and Assessment Units were introduced in September 1995. Staff who assess only GNVQ courses can work towards either TDLB D33 or the GPA Units. Staff who already hold TDLB D33 are not expected to gain either of the GPA Units. TDLB D34 remains the appropriate qualification for the Internal Verifier.

The **planning unit** has four elements which broadly require GNVQ Assessors to show that they:

- work within an overall course plan
- have a scheme of work which enables GNVQ students to generate evidence for the vocational and core skills units and towards the grading criteria
- plan to support student learning

The **assessment unit** has three elements. GNVQ Assessors will need to show:

- their use of assessment activities to cover vocational and core skill units and ensure opportunities to meet grading criteria
- the way in which they assess the students' evidence against the criteria
- that use is made of standardisation procedures and recording systems

Training and Development Lead Body Standards (TDLB)

The TDLB 'D units' have been used by colleges for the accreditation of staff assessing and verifying NVQ and GNVQ programmes.

The standards have been used for developing assessment policy and assessor guides and during professional development sessions to inform the development of appropriate procedures.

The 1994 revised TDLB, assessment and verification standards are as follows:

D32 Assess Candidate Performance

D321 Agree and review a plan for assessing performance

D322 Collect and judge performance evidence against criteria

D323 Collect and judge knowledge evidence

D324 Make assessment decisions and provide feedback

D33 Assess Candidate Using Diverse Evidence

D331 Agree and review an assessment plan

D332 Judge evidence and provide feedback

D333 Make assessment decision using differing sources of evidence and provide feedback

D34 Internally Verify the Assessment Process

D341 Advise and support assessors

D342 Maintain and monitor arrangements for processing assessment information

D343 Verify assessment practice

D35 Externally Verify the Assessment Process

D351 Provide information, advisory and support services to centres

D352 Verify assessment practice and centre procedures

D353 Maintain records or visits and provide feedback to awarding body

Standards in Action (FEU, 1993), illustrated how these standards can be used for human resource management and development, in particular for recruitment and selection, identifying training needs, professional development, appraisal and accreditation.

The Recurrent Funding Methodology

The recurrent funding methodology which is based on the notion of tariff values and units of funding places increased emphasis on initial assessment at the entry stage, student retention, and final qualifications gained at the achievement stage.

There are three categories of provision included in the tariff, the entry element, on-programme and achievement element. The methodology is based on the definition of a learning programme defined as a minimum twelve month period and the achievement of a primary learning goal which is seen as the end-point qualification aim or aims or other equivalent objectives. The unit values relate to the guided learning hours of a particular programme which is the contact time or supervised study and includes time spent by staff assessing students' work. Student numbers will be recorded on a tri-annual period basis. Funds for additional support can be claimed which is seen as any additional support provided over and above the programme to help an individual student to complete their learning programme. It may include the extra costs of specialist assessment at entry, special teaching arrangements, extra staffing, and tutorial support to remedy difficulties with literacy, numeracy or the English language.

Colleges will need to provide the following audit evidence relevant to assessment:

- a **learning agreement** which states the primary learning goal, the number of guided learning hours, the planned tri-annual periods and includes a summary of the additional support to be provided
- **evidence of the assessment and guidance process by which the learning agreement has been reached**
- evidence that the student for whom the units are claimed was undertaking a programme in the tri-annual period in question
- **evidence of APL** where appropriate
- **listings from the awarding bodies of successful candidates** and equivalent internal listings for certificates awarded by institutions themselves

Circular 94/27 sought responses on the following:

- moving some load-banded qualifications into the individually listed qualifications
- revising the cost weighting factors (additional band E)
- resit GCSEs in the same institution continuing to be funded as at present
- modifications to additional support
- arrangements regarding units for childcare
- college certificates of achievement being recognised for funding purposes until 1996

Circular 95/32 Recurrent funding methodology: Review of the tariff for 1996-97

This circular consults the sector on proposals regarding:

- a further extension to the number of individually listed qualifications
- external accreditation
- adoption of a new subject classification database

It is proposed that the following evidence be used to determine whether a qualification is eligible for funding:

- a clear statement of intended learning outcomes needed for progression
- a simple statement of the assessment process required for each student
- a statement of which external agency would agree the assessments
- confirmation that external accreditation enables progression

Recognition for funding purposes of qualifications with college certification has been removed.

Individualised Student Record Data and College Performance Indicators

Individualised Student Record (ISR) Data Collection - FEFC circular 94/10

It is proposed that the ISR should, in time, replace:

- the further education statistical record (FESR);
- annual monitoring survey (AMS)
- short course record
- the publication of information on student achievements (PISA) data collected by the DFE

The ISR is intended to be in line with the definitions and concepts of the funding methodology and would be a means of collecting data regarding the qualifications on entry of full-time students and would allow for the provision of data about modular programmes.

In the first phase of implementation 167 colleges will be involved in introducing the ISR. In time, over the period 1994-1996, all colleges will be requested to provide the following information:

STUDENT DATASET

- dataset reference
- date of birth
- sex
- date of first enrolment

QUALIFICATIONS DATASET

- qualifications on entry data
- mode of attendance
- guided learning hours
- start date
- actual end date
- completion status
- outcome

In terms of assessment, such data will give colleges the opportunity to carry out statistical quality assurance for the measurement of success rates within different modes of assessment and attendance; different awarding bodies;and different qualification aims. Such data can be used to track cohorts not only by gender, age and ethnicity, but according to departments/faculties.

COLLEGE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

FEFC CONSULTATION CIRCULAR 94/12; 94/31; 95/28

Circular 94/12

The FEFC consultation paper on college performance indicators identified four key areas of college activity about which it is proposed to collect performance indicators :

- the recruitment of students and the growth in enrolments
- student continuation rates
- the achievement of students' primary learning goals and the contribution to the NTETs
- the value for money of provision illustrated by the amount of Council funding received by a college to deliver its strategic plan

Six performance indicators were proposed :

1. College effectiveness which will measure the college's ability to set and meet proposed targets for provision

2. College responsiveness which will indicate the extent to which a college is providing a range of programmes which meet the needs of students as reflected in enrolment trends

3. Student responsiveness which will be measured by student continuation rates

4. Student achievements which will provide an indication of the achievements by students at the completion of their learning programmes in relation both to the number of students and the number of qualification aims

5. Contribution to national targets which will be measured by the college's contribution to the foundation and lifetime targets

6. Value for money which will assess the college's efficiency as measured by the average funding per unit

Value-added

The circular indicates that it is widely recognised that the development of value-added measures could become key indicators of the effectiveness of institutions and that the FEFC has a strong interest in developing value-added approaches. The FEU bulletins on value-added indicate progress made in this area by the sector.

Circular 94/31

Circular 94/31, measuring achievement, published in November 1994 described the council's intention to publish six performance indicators annually for each college, starting with the 1994 - 1995 college year.

Circular 95/28

This circular sets out proposals to provide an additional service to colleges by calculating and publishing management statistics for the further education sector. The statistics would be calculated from three main data collections: the individualised student record (ISR); the staff individualised record (SIR); and the finance record.

Appendix B: sources of information

FEU DOCUMENTS

Assessment Issues and Problems in a Criterion-Based System	1993
Examining Assessment	1994
GNVQ Curriculum Manual	1994
Introducing GNVQs	1993
Introducing GNVQs: Staff Development	1993
Introducing GNVQs Planning, Co-ordinating and Managing the GNVQ Curriculum	1994
Managing Learning: The role of the Recording of Achievement	1993
Managing the Delivery of Guidance in Colleges	1994
Maximising Potential Through Individual Action Planning	1994
Modular A Levels: Briefing Note	1994
Standards in Action	1993
Quality in Guidance for Adults	1994
Value-added (bulletin)	1994

FEFCE CIRCULARS

Assessing Achievement 93/28

Recurrent Funding Methodology (Circulars) 93/32, 93/39 94/27; 95/32

Guidance Document on the Recurrent Funding Methodology 1994-95 1994

College Performance Indicators 94/12; 94/31; 95/28

Individualised Student Record Data Collection 94/10

FROM DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

DFE Charter for FE 1993

FROM THE FORMER EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT

Competence and Assessment Compendium No. 3 1994

Revised TDLB Standards 1994

ED Report Number 23 : GNVQ Assessment Review Project (GARP) 1994

ED Report Number 22 : Ethics in Occupational Standards, NVQs, and SVQs 1994

ED Report: Directory of Computer Assisted Assessment 1994

FROM NCVQ

Awarding Bodies Common Accord	1993
Assessing Core Skills	1994
Code of Practice on GNVQ Assessment (1995-96)	1995
GNVQ Quality Framework	1995
Grading Advanced - GNVQs	1994
Grading Intermediate - GNVQs	1994
Students Work Assessed Series:	
- GNVQ Art and Design	
- GNVQ Business	
- GNVQ Health and Social Care	1994

FROM BTEC

Centre Approval Criteria - C and Qual. forms	1994
Handbook for External Verifiers and External Examiners, 1994-5	1994
GNVQ: Getting it Right	1995
GNVQ Implementation Guide	1993
Quality: Building it in and Checking it Out	1993
Verifying Assessments - a handbook for internal verifiers and those who co-ordinate them	1994
Developing and Assessing Core Skills	1994

FROM CEL

Policy and Practice for Schemes, Awards and Certification, Assessment and Quality Assurance	1994
Producing a Portfolio of Evidence for an NVQ-Assessment Resource Book	1994
GNVQ Handbook (revised)	1994

FROM RSA

Accreditation of Prior Achievement	1992
GNVQ Centre Guidelines	1993
Individual GNVQ Scheme Booklets	
Access to Assessment - a guide to the arrangements available to candidates with special needs	1993

FROM NCET

Using IT for Assessment	1994

Appendix C: An assessment audit

The following questions are a useful starting point for a college wanting to audit its current systems and provision of assessment. It needs to be conducted early on in the planning stage for the strengths and weaknesses identified by the audit to be incorporated into the assessment development plan.

Policy

- What policies on assessment currently exist?
- Is there agreement on college assessment and verification practice?
- Does the college have an APL statement or set of procedures?

  Is this regularly reviewed?
- Is there agreement on initial assessment of students and assessment during induction?
- Does the college have a policy on the assessment of core skills?
- Does the college have a system for credit accumulation?
- What system is in place for an appeals procedure?
- Is there a policy on defining and recording achievement?

Management and administrative systems

- Is there a senior manager responsible for college assessment strategy?
- Is there a senior manager responsible for approving centre submissions to awarding bodies?
- Are there clearly defined roles across the college for managing examinations and assessment services?
- Is there a clear administrative procedure for managing assessment?
- Is there adequate liaison across college sites and programme teams for assessment planning?

- Does the college have a standard procedure for internal verification?
- Are accurate records kept of entry data and achievements?
- Is there a framework for monitoring and evaluating student assessment and achievement?
- Does the management system cost assessment?

STAFFING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Which staff are engaged in the cross-college co-ordination of assessment?
- What systems are in place for staff development on assessment?
- How does the college manage the certification of assessors and internal verifiers within the TDLB standards or GNVQ Planning and Assessment Units?
- Is staff development in place to ensure that staff are able to support students on criterion-referenced assessment and outcomes-based curricula?
- Are staff trained in equal opportunities to ensure the development of fair assessment tools and methodologies?

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

- What facilities are available for assessment planning and recording such as:

  interview rooms
  guidance centres
  learning support facilities

- What facilities are available for assessment opportunities within a realistic work environment such as:

  college training restaurant
  hairdressing salon
  college travel agency, etc.

- What facilities are available for core skills assessment such as:

  core skills workshops
  open learning centres
  learning resources centre

Programme teams

- Does the college have an agreed set of student entitlements to assessment?
- How do programme teams plan assessment?
- How do teams develop programme assessment tools and methodologies?
- How do programme teams co-ordinate assessment and feedback to candidates?
- Is there a system for internal verification or moderation?
- How are students informed of assessment requirements?
- Is there a programme-based appeals procedure for candidates?

Quality assurance and control

- Is assessment monitored as part of the college quality control cycle?
- Does the college evaluate data on student achievements at entry and exit?
- Does the college monitor student achievement across programme teams and levels?
- Is there a system for monitoring and evaluating achievement rates of candidates in relation to equal opportunities?
- Does the college have a system for measuring value-added?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the college project co-ordinators I have worked with on this. The illustrations are only extracts from their very comprehensive reports.

Colleges and co-ordinators involved in the *Managing assessment* projects (RPs85,826):

City of Liverpool Community College: Pam Peers, Nigel Ecclesfield

GLOSCAT Gloucester College of Art and Technology: Christine Megson, Steve Porter

Hull College: Jim Aleander, Dr Robb Robinson

Mid-Kent College: Marlene Cooper, Jan Loose

Nelson and Colne College: Dr Wyn Smith, Alan Dye

Oaklands College: Jenny Scott, Lesley Davies

Rutland Sixth-Form College: Peter Mayne

Sandwell College: Paul Sutton, Val Talbot

Southgate College: Danny Clough, Steve Caley, Jenni Wain

South Thames College: Thalia Marriott, Catherine Sacre

A consultative draft of this document was produced in October 1994 and disseminated through a series of national conferences. This final publication reflects the responses to the document made by FE and sixth-form colleges.

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